

## Minerals Management Service

[www.mms.gov](http://www.mms.gov)

### Offshore Oil Spills: PREVENTION is Paramount

Minimizing the possibility of an oil spill throughout the offshore energy exploration and extraction process is one of the Minerals Management Service's (MMS) top priorities. In the aftermath of the 2005 hurricane season, it was evident that the preventive measures had a significant impact. There were no well spills; all of the shut-off valves held; and spills from ruptured segments of pipelines and other sources were limited. No spills from the Outer Continental Shelf were known to have reached shore.

An estimated 17,652 barrels of oil are known to have accidentally spilled into Gulf of Mexico waters as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, about 3.6 percent of the amount that enters the Gulf annually from natural seeps.

Average annual Gulf of Mexico oil production is more than 500 million barrels per year.

A number of additional modifications to already stringent preparedness procedures have been issued. The process of adding them to the official set of regulations that energy operators must conform to is ongoing.

The new requirements address detailed aspects of offshore energy equipment, procedures, and reporting requirements. Highlights of the new requirements are:

- **Pipelines:** Additional inspection of pipelines, risers, pipeline crossings, and pipeline leak tests are required.

- **Data:** More detailed site-specific data on potential installation hazards must be provided.
- **Risk:** Risk Assessment Checklist, summarizing risk exposure and emphasizing potential oil spill risk exposure must be developed and followed.
- **Anchors:** Additional information on types of anchors used to moor equipment, with details of the subsea infrastructure within a 10-mile radius of equipment must be obtained.
- **Mooring:** Contractors must provide a mooring inspection document.
- **Additional Mitigation:** Any additional information – regarding the potential for oil spills or other criteria – that could mitigate risks or alter moored rig fitness requirements for the 2006 hurricane season is also required.

MMS manages offshore oil and gas exploration as well as renewable energy sources including wind, wave, solar, and underwater current on 1.76 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf while protecting the human, marine, and coastal environments. MMS also collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands.

For more information on MMS and oil spill preparation, visit [www.mms.gov](http://www.mms.gov).

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